

POLICY BRIEF

Family Medicine's Gender Pay Gap

Yalda Jabbarpour, MD, Andrea Wendling, Melina Taylor,
Andrew Bazemore, MD, MPH, Aimee Eden, PhD, MPH, and Yoonie Chung

Female physicians earn less than their male counterparts, and many explanatory factors have been offered to account for these differences. An analysis of the 2019 American Board of Family Medicine New Graduate Survey Data demonstrates that women make 16% less than men, regardless of experience or hours worked. (J Am Board Fam Med 2022;35:7–8.)

Keywords: Family Medicine, Gender Differences, Income, Primary Health Care, Surveys and Questionnaires, Women Physicians, Workforce

Despite the rise in the number of women in medicine and evidence that female physicians have better patient outcomes, women physicians continue to earn less than men.^{1,2} A recent study showed that females generated lower relative value units despite spending *more* time in direct patient care compared with their male colleagues but did not study income.³ Studies that have focused on income have not reported data for family medicine specifically and have not accounted for hours worked.^{4,5} Our objective was to examine the gender pay gap in family medicine, accounting for number of hours worked.

Self-reported clinical income and work hour data from the 2019 American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM) National Graduate Survey were analyzed. This survey, which collects demographic and practice-level information, was administered to all ABFM diplomates 3 years after residency completion and had a 73.6% response

rate. Participants' free text answers to "What is your most recent pretax annual clinical income?" and "Please estimate your typical workload (hours per week)" were analyzed. The total number of weekly hours reported was multiplied by 52 to obtain annual hours worked. Hourly pay was calculated by dividing reported income by annual hours worked, and results were stratified by gender. Respondents who had missing values were dropped.

The final sample consisted of 2371 respondents, 55% (1304) of whom were female and 45% (1067) male. The average annual income for respondents was \$217,018, and the average workload in a typical week was almost 54 hours. Female family physicians on average earned less and worked less than male family physicians: females' average annual clinical income was \$43,098 less than males, and they worked 3.9 hours less per week. However, when examining hourly compensation, we found that this difference in earnings could not be explained by hours alone. On average, female family physicians earned \$79/hour, whereas male family physicians earned \$94/hour, amounting to a nearly 16% difference in hourly pay. This pattern held when considering clinical hours only, where male family physicians earned more hourly (124.2 dollars vs 105.6 dollars), amounting to a 15% difference in pay (Table 1).

These findings add to mounting evidence that gender pay disparities persist and show that, for family medicine, this disparity is irrespective of hours worked. It is concerning that this gap exists *only 3 years after graduation*, as this minimizes the impact of seniority and experience as contributor factors. The causes of this pay disparity are

This article was externally peer reviewed.
Submitted 26 February 2021; revised 23 April 2021;
accepted 27 April 2021.

From Robert Graham Center for Policy Studies in Primary Care and Family Medicine, Washington, DC (YJ, YC); Michigan State University College of Human Medicine, East Lansing, MI (AW); American Board of Family Medicine, Lexington, KY (MT, AB, AE); Center for Professionalism and Value in Health Care, Washington DC (AB).

Funding: none.

Conflict of interest: none.

Corresponding author: Yalda Jabbarpour, MD, American Academy of Family Physicians, 1133 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC 20036, Washington (E-mail: yjabbarpour@aafp.org).

See Related Commentary on
Page 197.

Table 1. Mean Income and Hours Worked by Gender

	Income	Weekly Hours Worked	Weekly Hours Worked (Clinical Work Only)	Hourly Compensation (\$)	Hourly Compensation (Clinical Work Only) (\$)
Overall	217,018	53.6	41.2	85.7	114.0
Female	197,623	51.9	39.5	79.0	105.6
Male	240,720	55.8	43.2	93.8	124.2

Source: 2019 American Board of Family Medicine National Graduate Survey.

multifactorial and not only merit further investigation but policy and health system attention in search of tangible solutions to ensure equal pay for an increasingly female workforce.

To see this article online, please go to: <http://jabfm.org/content/35/1/7.full>.

References

1. Tsugawa Y, Jena AB, Figueroa JF, Orav EJ, Blumenthal DM, Jha AK. Comparison of hospital mortality and readmission rates for Medicare patients treated by male vs female physicians. *JAMA Intern Med* 2017;177:206–13.
2. Dahrouge S, Seale E, Hogg W, et al. A comprehensive assessment of family physician gender and quality of care: a cross-sectional analysis in Ontario, Canada. *Med Care* 2016;54:277–86.
3. Ganguli I, Sheridan B, Gray J, Chernew M, Rosenthal MB, Neprash H. Physician work hours and the gender pay gap—evidence from primary care. *N Engl J Med* 2020;383:1349–57.
4. Read S, Butkus R, Weissman A, Moyer DV. Compensation disparities by gender in internal medicine. *Ann Intern Med* 2018;169:658–61.
5. Jena AB, Olenski AR, Blumenthal DM. Sex differences in physician salary in US public medical schools. *JAMA Intern Med* 2016;176:1294.